DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 258 472 FL 015 101

TITLE A Study of the Extent and Effect of English Language Training for Refugees. Phase One: Results of a Comprehensive Mail Survey. Executive Summary.
INSTITUTION Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, Oreg. Office of Research and Evaluation Services.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Refugee Resettlement (DHHS), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Sep 82
CONTRACT HHS-100-81-0066
NOTE 19p.; For related documents, see FL 015 102-105.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Costs; Educational Quality; *English (Second Language); *Financial Support; National Surveys; Policy Formation; Program Administration; Program Design; *Program Effectiveness; Public Policy; *Refugees; Regional Planning; *Second Language Instruction; State Agencies; *Student Characteristics

ABSTRACT

Results of a national survey of regional, state, and local agencies administering English language training programs for refugees, the first phase of a larger study of the training programs, are reported. The executive summary outlines the responses from 8 regional, 36 state, and 232 local agencies on four topics: (1) the nature and extent of English language training for refugees, including the characteristics of local service providers and their programs; (2) the resources and costs involved in that training, including the sources of funds and the ways they are allocated; (3) the characteristics of the refugees receiving training; and (4) factors relating to program quality and success. Recommendations based on the findings are made to four groups: local service providers, state level refugee program administrators, national policymakers, and organizations engaged in resarch and evaluation. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED258472

A Study of the Extent and Effect of English Language Training for Refugees

Phase One: Results of A Comprehensive Mail Survey

September 1982

Office of Refugee Resettlement
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Prepared for:

Office of Refugee Resettlement
United States Department of Health and Human Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared by the

Literacy & Language Program
Division of Evaluation, Research and Assessment
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
300 S.W. Sixth Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97204

Contract No.: HHS-100-81-0066

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. Margaret Rogers

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

FL 015 101

In October 1981, the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement awarded a contract to the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory for the study of the provision of English language training for refugees. The study entails three phases: (1) a mail survey of English language training programs, (2) an on-site review of a sample of programs and (3) the measurement of adult refugees' acquisition of English as it relates to the mix of language training and employment.

This report presents the results of the first phase of the study, a comprehensive mail survey concerning the provision of English language training for refugees. Three questionnaires were used, each targeted on a different level of the service delivery system: one for the ten regional offices of the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, one for the 52 state coordinators who administer the refugee resettlement program and one for the 327 local service providers who directly deliver refugee English language training using ORR funds. The survey was conducted in the spring of 1982 and focuses on the extent, nature, quality and cost of English language training during federal fiscal years 1981 and 1982.

Eight regional, 36 state and 232 local surveys were returned, representing a 71% response rate. Response rates were equally representative for states having large and small refugee populations.

Survey findings are grouped under four major topics:

1) The Nature and Extent of English Language Training for Refugees, which describes the characteristics of the local service providers and their programs.

2) The Resources and Costs Involved in English Language Training for Refugees, which explores the sources of funds and manner in which they are allocated for refugee English language training.

3) The Characteristics of Refugees Receiving English Language Training, which describes the number and background of refugees enrolled in English language training programs.

4) The Factors Relating to Program Quality and Success, which explores factors seeming to impact program performance and outcomes.

Nature and Extent of English Language Training for Refugees

About one-half of the ORR-funded English language training programs for refugees are based in secondary school adult education programs and community colleges. The remaining programs are housed within a wide range of public and private non-profit organizations. Two-thirds of the reporting agencies are primarily educational institutions, whereas the other one-third are multi-service community organizations. About three-fifths of all local service providers are from the public sector.

Most of the organizations are primarily engaged in human resource development. Two-thirds of these organizations provided English language training prior to ORR funding. Nearly all feel that they are continuing to serve their primary clientele successfully with the advent of ORR funding and that the ORR funding enhances the quality of their overall program. Most programs provide a range of support services for adult refugees in addition to English language training. Although they remain important services, provision of transportation and translation/interpretation has declined somewhat from FFY 81 to FFY 82. Currently, 42% of the local service providers have refugees as their exclusive clientele, which accounts for the wide range of resettlement/support services being provided by these programs. The percentage of clientele who are refugees did not change from year to year.

Respondents to the state coordinators survey and respondents to the local service providers survey agree that "survival" English and employment-related training are the primary goals for English language training. State coordinators responding to the survey, however, tend to emphasize employment-related goals, whereas local providers tend to emphasize literacy and cultural orientation.

More than two-thirds of the programs do not tailor their English language training to a specific segment of the adult refugee population. Where differentiation does occur, student levels of literacy and English proficiency, previous academic training and employment status are considered to be the most important factors.

Priorities for admission to refugee training are in effect in a majority of the states, especially in the 15 states with the greatest populations of refugees. Recency of arrival and eligibility for public assistance are the most common admission criteria. Nearly all states have policies which prescribe time limits on refugees' participation in English language training--an average of 13.5 months.

English language training programs are most often staffed by part-time personnel. Part-time teachers make up the largest segment (40%) of all paid positions in the programs. Volunteers are also used by about one-half of the programs. Student-teacher ratios average 15 to 1. Bilingual personnel are used by more than three-fourths of the programs, usually as aides and counselors; despite the availability of personnel, bilingual instruction is a low priority for most of the programs.

About one-half of the programs have educational and experiential requirements for their instructors. English language teachers are generally expected to hold a baccalaureate degree, a teaching certificate and one year of relevant experience. Differences exist between requirements for full-time and part-time teachers; ironically, minimum requirements for part-time staff generally exceed those for their full-time counterparts since part-time teachers are more commonly used for refugee English language training.

Programs provide English language training at one to three locations, enrolling an average of 177 refugees during FY 1982, somewhat less than the previous year. Programs typically offer parallel sections of several levels of instruction.

A typical class meets three hours per day, four days per week over a 15-week term, comprising 160 hours of instruction per course. Most courses enroll adult refugees exclusively. Programs had an average refugee attendance of 87 adults in March 1982. Normative information concerning these program characteristics are provided in the appendices.

A factor analysis of the characteristics of refugee English language training programs identified four major dimensions which differentiate programs--program size, emphasis on job services, degree of service coordination and linkage, and emphasis on vocational English as a second language.

The Resources and Costs Associated with English Language Training for Refugees

More than 98 percent of the funds administered by states for refugee English language training come from the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Adult Basic Education monies are the most common supplement to refugee English language training, with about half of the local service providers using such funds. Funding per program declined from an average of $56,110 in FY 81 to $45,621 in FY 82.

Funds are distributed by states primarily by grants and contracts let through a Request For Proposal process. In addition, interagency agreements are frequently used by states to allocate the funds. About one-third of the states have policies earmarking a proportion of ORR social service funds for English language training.

About three-fourths of the funds for English language training at the local level are spent directly on instruction by the recipient local service providers. The remainder is evenly divided between costs for support services and administration. The median cost per student instructional hour increased 16 percent from $2.00 in FY 81 to $2.31 in FY 82.

The Characteristics of Refugees Receiving English Language Training

During FY 81, local service providers enrolled an average of 190 adult refugees in English language training programs. Enrollment declined to an average of 177 in FY 82. Most refugee students are enrolled in relatively large programs which serve more than 150 students per year. Three-fourths of the refugee students are enrolled in the 15 states having the largest populations of refugees.

About 58 percent of the refugee students are male. In FY 82, 70 percent of the refugee students were under the age of 40, compared to 87 percent of adult refugees nationally in this age category; the programs tend to serve an older segment of the population. In FY 82, more than

one-third (36.4%) of the refugee students were Vietnamese, followed by Lao (18.8%), Khmer (15.6%), Chinese-Vietnamese (13.2%) and Hmong (10.5%). Haitian and Cuban entrants represent less than one percent of the total refugee student population, whereas Soviet refugees represent less than one-half of one percent. Over the two years, the proportions of students served who are Vietnamese, Khmer, and Chinese grew, while the proportions of Lao, Hmong and Mien students declined. A substantial proportion (15.2%) of refugee adults enrolled in English language training have had no previous formal education, with an additional 49.1% who have had only a limited formal education. Only about one-third (35.7%) have had more than six years of formal schooling. The percentage of students with little or no previous education declined from FY 81 to FY 82. The percentage of refugee students having limited prior education is greater in the 15 states having the largest refugee populations.

In FY 82, local service providers reported that 81.2 percent of the refugee students were literate in <u>some</u> language, up by more than five percent from the previous year. Essentially one in five refugee adult students has had no experience with either the formal schooling process or literacy.

More than half (57.6%) of the refugee students enrolled in English language training arrived in the United States within the previous twelve months. Seventy percent of refugee students in FY 82 are unemployed, compared to 78.7 percent in FY 81.

One-half of the states responding to the survey use refugee population density as a criterion for allocating funds, targeting English language training funds to highly impacted areas.

Three-fourths of the local service providers do not have waiting lists for refugees to enroll in English language training. Where waiting lists exist, an average of 204 students wait an average of five and one-half weeks to enter the programs. Overall, the size of waiting lists is 11% of the total enrollment. The use of admissions priorities appears to have little influence on waiting lists.

Three-fourths of the local service providers responding to the survey have open-entry policies whereby students can enroll in English language training classes at any time during the term.

Refugee characteristics also influence participation in English language training. Certain demographic, economic and affective factors inhibit students' participation in the program and the learning process.

<u>Factors Relating to Program Quality and Success</u>

The survey examined the kinds of information routinely collected concerning program performance, the extent to which the English language training programs appear to operate effectively, characteristics associated with program performance and current efforts at program improvement.

Standards and guidelines for program operation are in effect for most English language training programs. State coordinators indicated that standards generally exist for program evaluation, staff training and qualifications and program design. At the local level, most service providers have guidelines for instructional materials and methods, program design, student assessment, staff training and qualifications, and program evaluation. Most state coordinators and local service providers identified program performance standards in practice or feel that they could be usefully and feasibly implemented, particularly in the area of costs per student instructional hour.

Nearly all (94%) of the state coordinators responding routinely collect information from local service providers. This information, however, deals primarily with funds, student characteristics and program descriptive information. Less than half collect information about program evaluation findings which could provide evidence of program effectiveness.

Essentially all states monitor their local English language training programs for compliance, fiscal and technical assistance purposes. Only about one-third of the state respondents conduct impact evaluations of their programs. State coordinators noted that information is not usually gathered which measures the impact of programs on refugees' language proficiency, employment and self-sufficiency. At the local level, the student records maintained by English language training programs do not provide a useful picture of some characteristics which affect instruction--e.g., prior schooling and literacy. Most programs use assessment procedures for student placement and progress, but only about half of the programs use formal, standardized tests. Thus, evidence which could be used to document program outcomes and effectiveness is relatively limited at both the state and local levels.

Some indicators of program performance were collected in the survey of local service providers. English language training programs report an average program completion rate of 50.1% for their refugee students. Among the various types of institutions, vocational-technical schools have the highest completion rate (65%), whereas high school adult education programs have the lowest (41%). Respondents indicated that refugee students require an average of 661 hours or about eleven months to complete English language training programs. These estimates of time taken to complete the programs do not differ across types of institutions.

The shorter the total program duration, the higher its completion rate. This may, however, have no bearing on the actual level of language proficiency achieved. The greater the instructional intensity in hours per week, the higher the overall student completion rate. Open-entry programs and programs which do not stress literacy as a goal tend to experience higher dropout rates. During a given term, 64% of the refugees successfully complete the class in which they are enrolled. Thirty percent of the refugee students depart the program during or after each term, but tend to leave for positive reasons--employment, program completion, or enrollment in vocational training or an academic program.

Since the backgrounds of refugees vary dramatically, as do the instructional goals of English language training programs, local service providers were asked to estimate the number of instructional hours required by each of four prototypical refugee students to develop "survival", "conversational" and "independent job search" English proficiency. Estimates for the four refugee students varied tremendously but consistently, demonstrating the effect of student characteristics on instructional efficiency. Average differences among these students were as great as 620 hours, reflecting a difference in instructional cost of more than $1400 per student. Apparently reliable differences exist among different types of institutions required to train a given type of student to a given level of proficiency. Community colleges, for example, seem to take longer.

A series of analyses was conducted to identify factors associated with some of these indicators of program success. A set of factors can be isolated--the percentage of full-time teachers and the number of instructional hours per week--which have a positive relationship with student completion rates. In addition, the rate of student unemployment seems to be related positively to program completion rate, reflecting motivational factors and perhaps increased time to participate in language training. Other factors related to program outcomes include the instructional emphasis given to employment, job services and literacy training. Of equal importance are those factors which are not related in any systematic way to outcome indicators--program size, mix of refugee and non-refugee clientele, and service mix.

A wide range of program improvement efforts are under way, involving technical assistance, staff development and program coordination activities. These efforts represent positive steps being taken to enhance refugee English language training.

About two-thirds of local service providers requested technical assistance in FY 82, primarily in the areas of instructional materials, staff development, curriculum design and student assessment. Eighty-eight percent of their requests were fulfilled, primarily by the Center for Applied Linguistics, other local service providers and state agencies.

Staff development efforts are also common, but the use of ORR funds for these purposes has declined. Training is generally conducted by in-house staff, state agencies or professional associations.

Close linkages are reported to exist between most programs and key services at the state and local level. Particularly close linkages are reported between programs and welfare, job placement and vocational training agencies. Close linkages are less commonly reported with agencies specifically dealing with refugee affairs. Although inter-program and inter-service linkages are generally recognized as being important, a substantial segment of the English language training programs do not maintain close ties with other services.

Recommendations

Recommendations are offered to four groups on the basis of the foregoing findings: (1) local service providers, (2) state level refugee program admininstrators (3) national policy-makers, and (4) organizations engaged in research and evaluation.

The issues posed by local service providers have been largely concerned with the quality of English language training for refugees. The findings suggest a number of positive steps should be taken in this regard:

a) Emphasize the use of qualified, full-time teachers having appropriate training, experience and sensitivity.

b) Design high-intensity instructional programs.

c) Further differentiate levels of instruction to tailor instruction to student needs.

d) Promote goal-directed instruction with clearly defined expectations and outcomes.

e) Focus on program outcomes and student success, rather than the process of instruction.

f) Continue program renewal efforts, such as staff development, technical assistance and inter-program coordination.

g) Continue to develop and share guidelines and standards for refugee English language training which may benefit other professionals and programs.

The issues with which states are most concerned deal with the efficiency of English language training for refugees. Survey findings offer several suggestions for enhancing refugee program services:

a) Institute program monitoring procedures which focus on program outcomes and student progress.

b) Continue technical assistance activities which promote program improvement and coordination of services.

c) Establish clear priorities and objectives for refugee English language training.

d) Establish long-term relationships with local service providers which will enhance program continuity, such as multi-year plans, operating standards and purchase of service agreements.

At the national policy-making level, the study has addressed a number of issues directly related to the quality of English language training opportunities for refugees:

a) The Office of Refugee Resettlement sponsors a substantial amount of English language training for refugees, which is further supplemented by funds from other sources. ORR-funded programs served an estimated 149,890 refugees in FY 82 with $29,201,062 of ORR funds, which was 43 percent of ORR social service dollars. This represents an expenditure of only about $200 per student served. An additional $23,059,569 from other sources was estimated to be used by the local programs.

b) At the federal level, resources should continue to be devoted to technical assistance services and dissemination of information which benefit local service providers. In the past, programs have used national technical assistance services extensively with a high degree of satisfaction.

c) The continuity of funding for English language training should be encouraged at the federal level so that local service providers can operate stable, ongoing programs.

The study further addresses the need for continued research, development and evaluation concerning English language training for refugees:

a) Continue research and development efforts to articulate instructional objectives and their associated instructional materials and performance measures.

b) Further explore the specific relationship between general English language instruction and employment-related language instruction as they influence refugee participation and progress in English language training programs.

c) Further explore the mannner in which the organizational background of the local service provider influences program focus and performance.

d) Determine the effect of increased instructional differentiation versus increased program accessibility on refugee participation and performance.

ORR social service funds may be used to support a wide range of services directed toward refugee resettlement and self-sufficiency. English language training plays a major role in this regard. Issues relating to the relative service mix of English language training, employment services and other support services cannot be adequately addressed by the present survey alone. The results of the survey do show that refugees are gaining access to English language training within a few months of arrival and are successfully moving through the training programs. The direct effects of formal language training on refugees' acquisition of English and employment, however, must be examined by continued research, including subsequent phases of the current study.

APPENDIX

NORMATIVE TABLES OF KEY ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

1 Normative distribution of the number of locations at which organizations provide refugee English language training (LA1)

2 Normative distribution of the percentage of local service providers' clientele who are refugees in FY 82 (LA4)

3 Normative distribution of the cost per refugee student instructional hour in FY 82 (LB2)

4 Normative distribution of the number of full-time teachers employed in English language training programs (LD1)

5 Normative distribution of the number of part-time teachers employed in English language training programs (LD1)

6 Normative distribution of the number of course levels offered concurrently by local service providers (LE2)

7 Normative distribution of the average number of hours per day a class is offered by local service providers (LE2)

8 Normative distribution of the average weeks per term classes are offered by local service providers (LE2)

9 Normative distribution of the number of students per teacher in English language training classes (LE2)

10 Normative distribution of the percentage of English language training paid teachers who are full-time (LD1)

11 Normative distribution of the percentage of English language training program funds directly devoted to instructional costs (LB1)

Table 1

NORMATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF LOCATIONS AT WHICH ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDE REFUGEE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING

(n = 226)

Locations	Percent of Programs	Cumulative Percent
1	44	44
2	20	64
3	10	74
4	8	81
5	6	87
6	4	92
7	2	93
8	1	95
9	1	96
10	1	96
11	4	100

Table 2

NORMATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PERCENTAGE OF LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS' CLIENTELE WHO ARE REFUGEES IN FY 82

(n = 159)

Percent of Clientele Refugee	Percent of Programs	Cumulative Percent of Programs
1-9	20	20
10-19	6	26
20-29	3	29
30-39	5	34
40-49	3	37
50-59	2	39
60-69	3	42
70-79	2	44
80-89	5	49
90-100	51	100

Table 3

NORMATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF THE COST PER
REFUGEE STUDENT INSTRUCTIONAL HOUR IN FY 82

(n = 150)

Cost Per Student Instructional	Percent of Programs	Cumulative Percent
Less than $1.00	10	10
$1.00 to $1.99	27	37
$2.00 to $2.99	22	59
$3.00 to $3.99	9	68
$4.00 to $4.99	7	75
$5.00 to $5.99	2	77
$6.00 to $6.99	1	78
$7.00 to $7.99	2	79
$8.00 or more	21	100

Table 4

NORMATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF FULL-TIME TEACHERS EMPLOYED IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS

(n = 215)

Number of Full-Time Teachers	Percent of Programs	Cumulative Percent
None	57	57
1-4	32	89
5-9	8	97
10-14	1	98
15-19	1	99
20 or more	1	100

Table 5

NORMATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF PART-TIME TEACHERS EMPLOYED IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS

(n = 210)

Number of Part-Time Teachers	Percent of Programs	Cumulative Percent
None	27	27
1-4	42	69
5-9	21	90
10-14	6	96
15-19	1	97
20 or more	3	100

Table 6

NORMATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF COURSE LEVELS OFFERED CONCURRENTLY BY LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

(n = 195)

Number of Course Levels	Percent of Programs	Cumulative Percent
1	14	14
2	12	26
3	21	47
4	14	61
5	11	72
6	8	80
7	5	85
8	5	90
9	5	95
10	1	96
11 or more	4	100

Table 7

NORMATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS PER DAY A CLASS IS OFFERED BY LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

(n = 192)

Hours Per Day	Percent of Programs	Cumulative Percent
1	4	7
2	28	32
3	44	76
4	44	88
5	7	95
6	4	99
7	1	100

Table 8

NORMATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF WEEKS PER TERM CLASSES ARE OFFERED BY TOTAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

(n = 179)

Weeks Per Term	Percent of Programs	Cumulative Percent
1-9	8	8
10-19	53	61
20-29	12	73
30-39	6	79
40-49	6	85
50 or more	15	100

Table 9

NORMATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS PER TEACHER IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING CLASSES

(n = 182)

Number of Students Per Teacher	Percent of Programs	Cumulative Percent
1-4	7	7
5-9	12	19
10-14	23	42
15-19	23	65
20-24	18	83
25-29	10	93
30-34	3	96
35-39	1	97
40 or more	3	100

Table 10

NORMATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PERCENTAGE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING PAID TEACHERS WHO ARE FULL-TIME

(n = 206)

Percent of Teachers Full-Time	Percent of Programs	Cumulative Percent
0	55	55
1-9	4	59
10-19	3	62
20-29	5	67
30-39	2	69
40-49	3	72
50-59	5	77
60-69	1	78
70-79	2	80
80-89	1	81
90-100	19	100

Table 11

NORMATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PERCENTAGE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAM FUNDS DIRECTLY DEVOTED TO INSTRUCTIONAL COSTS

(n = 177)

Percentage of Funds for Instruction	Percent of Programs	Cumulative Percent
1-9	1	1
10-19	1	2
20-29	1	3
30-39	7	10
40-49	8	18
50-59	10	28
60-69	11	39
70-79	16	55
80-89	18	73
90-100	27	100